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REFLECTIONS ON ROMANTICISM

By D. C. PARKER

I

THE following remarks are set down here by way of reflection and suggestion and are not offered in any dogmatic spirit. The whole question being subjective, it is capable of being treated only with the greatest latitude, and it will be evident to those who have given the matter a moment's thought that unusual difficulties lie in the path of the historian who would do full justice to the romantic movement. Not the least of the problems meets us as at the very threshold. Probably no two persons have exactly the same conception of what romanticism is. Very often one discovers the critic engaged in a search for a concise, yet adequate definition. Most people have a vague idea that the word romanticism is employed to indicate a work which is not classical, but it is impossible to proceed far with a negation. We are, therefore, forced to ask with Sainte-Beuve, "What is meant by a classic?" One writer, eschewing this method and satisfied with a grand show of authority, tells us that "classicism is routine, romanticism is liberty;" another, with equal confidence, that "classicism is imitation, romanticism is originality." Stendhal argued that all good art was romantic in its day. "Romanticism," he held, "is the art of presenting to people the literary works which in the actual state of their habits and beliefs are capable of giving them the greatest possible pleasure; classicism, on the contrary, of presenting them with that which gave the greatest possible pleasure to their grandfathers." In these assertions, as in Victor Hugo's contention that "romanticism is liberalism in literature," we seem to detect something of the exuberance which characterised the manifestos of the new creed. Such fine flourishes of finality may satisfy the makers of the phrases, but they do not deceive us, so we pass on. In comparison with the foregoing, Watts-Dunton's statement that the romantic movement was a re-introduction of the spirit of wonder seems modesty itself. Dr. William Barry, a critic of repute, is nearer to the mark when he says, "The classic is and must be the conservative, careful of the type, doting on past wonders, to whom the rules and forms of the ancients are synonymous with perfection. He looks back on

a world better than his own. Not so the romantic, whose millenium is yet to come. Therefore rebel and revolutionist he will be, seeking a type of which he dreams, nowhere as yet visible." Nevertheless, we can sympathise with the student who protests that the subject must be treated at length, that here generalisations may be more than usually convenient, but are more than usually deceptive. We feel that this was in Pater's mind when he wrote the pregnant Postscript to his volume of "Appreciations." Though primarily treating of literature, his remarks do not lose their appositeness if applied to music:

The words *classical* and *romantic*, although, like many other critical expressions, sometimes abused by those who have understood them too vaguely or too absolutely, yet define two real tendencies in the history of art and literature . . . The term *classical*, fixed, as it is, to a well-defined literature, and a well-defined group in art, is clear, indeed; but then it has often been used in a hard, and merely scholastic sense, by the praisers of what is old and accustomed, at the expense of what is new, by critics who would never have discovered for themselves the charm of any work, whether new or old, who value what is old in art or literature, for its accessories, and chiefly for the conventional authority that has gathered round it. . . .

And as the term, *classical*, has been used in a too absolute, and therefore in a misleading sense, so the term, *romantic*, has been used much too vaguely, in various accidental senses.

Further on the author wisely reminds the reader that "the romantic spirit is, in reality, an ever-present, an enduring principle, in the artistic temperament," and he argues that "it is the addition of strangeness to beauty that constitutes the romantic character in art." To him the essential elements of the romantic spirit are curiosity and the love of beauty. I have cited the above views because, while, without exception, those of literary men, they offer some guidance to the musician and it seems right that they should precede a consideration of romantic music, because they emphasise the initial difficulty with which the critic is confronted.

In the main Pater is right, I think, when he says that the romantic spirit is an ever-present principle. It must be obvious that while the phrase "romantic music" is used to describe the works of certain men, the characteristics found in them are to be found also in those of masters commonly referred to as classical; and it ought in justice to be added that the romanticists are not entirely devoid of the characteristics which are prominent in the classicists. Classical music is not necessarily lacking in emotion, romantic music in form. Classicism does not consist of a denial of impulse, though it certainly sets a degree of

control to which the impulse must be subjected. Daniel Gregory Mason has remarked that the "Coriolan" overture may be considered either classical or romantic, according to the standpoint from which it is regarded. In short, realism, not classicism, is the antithesis of romanticism. It is, therefore, impossible to draw a dividing line between what is commonly called classical and what romantic music. Some measure of the assurance with which the romanticists pursued their aims was derived from a certain amount of encouragement which they received from earlier musicians. The gradual attainment of elasticity of form which is a notable feature of Beethoven's music almost seems to prophecy the coming of the later groups, and the fact that the composer thought of following "Fidelio" with an opera based on the romantic subject of "Melusina" should not be forgotten. Schubert often leads us to the romantic world and we remark his charming and novel use of the wood-winds, which, with the horn, so often became the effective mouthpieces of romantic sentiment. It is, however, impossible to deny that the romanticists were deeply affected by the romantic movement in literature, which anticipated its counterpart in music. Programme music as exemplified in Berlioz and Liszt has more in common with the dramatic and poetical works by which it was stimulated than with the early composers who took a literary idea as a basis for their pieces. Among the most notable exponents Weber, Berlioz, Schumann and Liszt were keenly alive to the beauties of literature. So, in order to grasp the full significance of the movement in music, it is necessary to acquaint ourselves with the history of the literary one.

Spirits wearied of the dry, materialistic philosophy of the eighteenth century revolted against all that was arid and academic. The attitude was, at first, merely one of protest. Excess of a thing produces its opposite. An age of scepticism is succeeded by one of faith. The extravagancies of an "Amadis de Gaul" are followed by a "Don Quixote." Emancipation was not to be gained by spasmodic attacks on pedantry, so, in the fullness of time, a new faith was born. Scorn of the pseudo-classical themes, which were a legacy of the Renaissance, went hand in hand with an impetus to Catholicism, which was a reaction against the secular tendency of the same. The other immediate effect was a restoration of folk-literature, ballad and legend, and the distinguishing traits were most plainly evident after the Napoleonic wars. Goethe declared that in Schiller's treatise "On naïve and sentimental poetry" the difference between classicism and

romanticism was first clearly set forth. An enthusiastic, if not always discriminating group of men upheld the new banner in Germany, among them E. T. A. Hoffmann, whom Dr. Brandes describes as representing "the transition from romantic authorship to romantic musical composition"—an important link. The chief representatives in Britain were Scott, who, in Balzac's words, "used the marvellous with truth," and Byron. In France, the scene of the fullest blossoms of its harvest, the movement became deeply rooted and affected almost the entire range of the nation's literature. Rousseau and Chateaubriand were its pioneers. Victor Hugo's "Hernani" was regarded as an artistic ultimatum and interest was heightened by the appearance of Madame de Staël's "De l'Allemagne."

II.

The characteristics of the musical manifestation of this spirit were not unlike those of the literary one. That both were different in kind may be proved by anyone who scrutinizes the representative products of the main exponents. In the German school a rustic strain is evident. As a result of the worship of imagination the glories of folk-lore were enthusiastically hailed. The magic of wood and stream was re-discovered; eyes grown young gazed upon sombre forests. Every hill had its Venus, every meadow its sprite, every rock its Lorelei. Ancient castles were repeopled with knights and dames; flowers held secret messages of hope and love; the hour of twilight, beloved of poets, loosed the springs of sentiment. There was a general glorification of the Middle Age, on which the culture of the eighteenth century had set its frown. Those of his novels in which Scott dealt with remote periods were the most highly esteemed. In a comment on Bernard Shaw's "Cashel Byron," Robert Louis Stevenson warned the author to "beware of his damned century". No such word of caution was necessary here. These men were evidently perfectly convinced that the picturesque past yielded treasures on which they could profitably feast their eyes. They cried for local colour—"point de salut sans couleur locale," said Mérimée—which trait Brunetière called "a literary acquisition of romanticism;" and local colour to them meant "the characteristics of foreign nations, of far-off days, of unfamiliar climes." "Don Quixote" may have smiled Spain's chivalry away, but the high priests of romanticism, combating a barren intellectual formula, set the wheels of chivalry in vigorous and noisy motion.

The naïve note so often piped East of the Rhine is not conspicuous in the French expression of the movement, which was more than a trifle sophisticated. Above all else was the instinct for revolt. Matters of cosmic significance were argued out in brilliant salons. The old world with its false valuations and futile traditions was to be thrown into a crucible. No requiem was appointed to be sung and the only incense was that of George Sand's cigars. The hour was the hour of youth, its fire and enthusiasm, its fads and follies. Behind this activity one perceives a burning contempt for the *bourgeoisie* with its placid routine and regular dividends, the expression of which provides us with an equivalent of Schumann's lampoons against the Philistines. The plain fact that so many of the poets and musicians of the boulevards were out of touch with the practical affairs of life was, doubtless, responsible for the whimsical remark that the artistic temperament consists of a disinclination to pay tradesmen's bills. And one almost feels tempted to parody Mr. Micawber's immortal lecture on economics by saying, "Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure nineteen nineteen six, the balance-sheet of a Philistine. Annual income twenty pounds, annual expenditure twenty pounds ought and six, the balance-sheet of a romanticist." It is related that Balzac, in a moment of desperation, exclaimed to a friend, "Come, let us spit upon Paris." This hostility, in part sincere, in part a concession to a kind of priggishness which took its cue from Byron's intellectual aloofness, proclaimed itself in eccentricity of dress—was not Gautier's waistcoat an historical garment?—and in a general swagger, braggadocio and extravagance which in many men stifled the inherent Gallic tendency towards classicism. There was nothing of the scrupulous weighing out, the rigid economy of the *moraliste*, nothing of Sainte-Beuve's golden mean. Mediocrity having decided that moderation was a sure sign of mediocrity, half the world set about painting the lily, the frogs were quick to ape the ox and superlatives were thrown about in bewildering profusion.

It is probably to the confidence in the romanticists' ability to set things right that we owe the intimate association of music with philosophy, religion and literature which marks the period under review. Not content with singing his song, the young artist must needs suck honey out of every flower, write his sonnet, paint his picture, erect his barricade. There is something youthful in the assurance with which this program was drawn up and gone through. The case of Schaune, the prototype of Murger's Schaunard, who wrote a symphony "On the Influence of Blue in

Art," was evidently typical of many. He has been depicted as one in sore distress not knowing whether he was a painter or a musician. That the musician is a man of general culture must, surely, have a beneficial influence; we get a genuine thrill of pleasure, not to be had elsewhere, when we come into contact with rich minds like those of Schumann and Liszt. And it is significant that the modern criticism of musical works can be traced to the hey-day of the movement. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that a restless coquetting with all things and sundry may very easily prevent a man's attaining a degree of eminence in any direction, may put a check on his complete development in one sphere, may, in fact, condemn him to the ranks of dilettantism, there to exhibit a kind of vain versatility.

III.

It would be foolish to ignore the fact that it is possible to say a hundred things against the romantic movement in music. It is easy to take stock of the works of a school, look for something which is not there and anathematise them on that score. Reticence, for example, has a high artistic value and it is not conspicuous in Berlioz. There are many who would not countenance such a method who yet cannot find it in their hearts to say anything in favour of the particular activity. It may be that some are born romanticists and that others achieve romanticism, but evidently you cannot thrust it upon a man. It seems to me that the verdict in each case must of necessity largely depend on the conception. To some romanticism means the long hair and ridiculous cut of coat commonly associated with the stage aspect. To others it appears as a mandate for excess and sentimental prodigality, as the origin of a pernicious view of the musician and the function of his art; to others, again, it seems a colossal pose, less a movement than a conspiracy; or, failing that, much spent strife and superannuated argument. A practical and material age in which utilitarianism is widespread and the cash nexus of the first importance pronounces a harsh judgment in no measured terms. What is romanticism? A faded rose, an obsolete phrase, departed beauty, none of which is quoted on the bourse. From its very nature romanticism is open to attack from many quarters. It is easy to ridicule some of the exponents who were devoid of the humour which saves the situation, and in these days, when the word Byronic is chiefly used as a derogatory epithet, it is difficult for the modern man to realize all that it conveyed to a past generation. The spirit of our time, which moves at a quicker *tempo* than

did that of the period of which I speak, breeds men with little stomach for a world of dreamy Werthers and Renées, moonshine and "Almavivory." To take another line of thought: our objection to an important phase of romanticism is a philosophical one if we accept the dictum that the ultimate expression of the universe must be optimistic. The most important case against romanticism, however, still remains to be stated. It is based on the view that the thing itself is fundamentally false. The word bohemianism does not describe a light, irresponsible way of living; it describes a tragedy, doubly tragic in that the externals are deceptive. The laughter is hollow, the high spirits are artificial. Romanticism, the argument runs, leads to foolish ideas and futile illusions. To Bernard Shaw, no friend of sugared sentimentality and perfumed voluptuousness, romantic love is lust decked out in Sunday attire. The fine hero in his silk and feathers is a villain at heart and we come away from an exhibition of mock-heroics with perverted senses and a dimmed vision to weigh mankind on an unjust scale. One feels that the shot is aimed at literature and the drama rather than at music. But the line of reasoning cannot be entirely set aside, because not a few have recorded a regret at what they consider Berlioz's sawdust-kicking, Liszt's cheap pagantry and empty rhetoric and the blend of melodrama and impossible mediævalism to which the Italian stage is largely consecrated.

IV.

So much for the debit; scanning the credit side of the ledger we see that it is not empty. Whatever its shortcomings, there is no doubt that the music of the most considerable exponents has given to the world an immense amount of material on which to sharpen its wits. The romantic period was, certainly, an era of personality and we do ourselves and it a very serious injustice if, counting the unrealised dreams, the unfulfilled hopes, the un-reached heights, we do not at the same time bear in mind that experimentation was in the air. The world, I believe, has yet to witness experimentation on a grand scale which is unaccompanied by baffled research and abortive exploration. There are defects peculiar to pioneer work which reflect not so much on the ability of the author as on the difficult nature of the task which he has undertaken. Sir Hubert Parry has said somewhere that the attitude of Monteverde towards the madrigal resembled that of Liszt and Schumann towards the sonata as exemplified in the former's example in B minor and the latter's in F# minor. It is commonly

held that our greatest indebtedness to the romanticists lies in their generous use of colour, the musical analogy of the sensualisation of language which Dr. Brandes finds in their literary brethren, whether in harmony as in Chopin and Schumann, or in orchestration as in Weber, Berlioz, Liszt and Wagner. The remark has some justification, but it may cause us to overlook the fact that the leading spirits were not so lacking on the intellectual side as the casual observer might suppose. To Weber we owe the standard pronouncement on *tempi*; to Berlioz a valuable work on instrumentation; to Wagner an elaborate treatise on conducting. And we have still to learn that Schumann was deficient in brain power. There is, no doubt, a sense of completeness in classical music which is not to be found in romantic, and this is because classicism looks to the past and draws its strength from experience and tradition. For this reason all absolute music tends to become purely formal except in the hands of the very greatest. In the romantic works we are frequently conscious of a great disparity between the aim and the fulfilment. It could not well be otherwise with men who set out on voyages of discovery. Nevertheless, the student cannot fail to acknowledge that the romantic works have provided the most considerable stimulus to modern music. As a source of suggestion they have been enormously fruitful. A careful examination of the music of the last half-century would give proof of the fact that a very large proportion of the sum total has been influenced by the methods and manners of the romanticists; and, be it noted, this influence is not to be traced in superficialities and externals but in the very essence of the music itself. The intrinsic merit of much that came from the pens of the great figures cannot for a moment be disregarded; but it must be obvious that, to set the romanticists in the right focus, one must allow that there are men whose value lies not so much in their achievements as in the pregnancy of their utterances. In other words, one must recognise that many composers, whose works require no word of apology, have a greater historical importance than the formalist is willing to admit. What Liszt meant to music cannot be gauged from his compositions alone. In all fairness we have to own that his contribution was not confined to them. We refresh ourselves with the works of others which would never have existed had it not been for the activity which he inaugurated. One may deplore the absence of this or that virtue in Berlioz, Schumann or Liszt; one may think of the classic groves while wandering in which one beholds a universe ordered, controlled and self-sufficient, but he who only looks askance at the tangle and brushwood which lie in

the path of the explorer surely forgets the immense indebtedness of those who follow in his wake.

Whatever course the argument take it must be manifest that there will always be minds which find the supreme pleasure in recollection and others which find it in adventure. If there were no God, said Voltaire, it would be necessary to invent one; and those who feel the necessity for embarking on the strange expeditions which are impossible save in the regions of the mind appear to exclaim, "If there can be no knight-errantry it is necessary to invent it." By a whimsical turn of fate, the most famous apologist for this attitude is to be found among the "nation of shopkeepers." In his introduction to "Quentin Durward" (1831) Sir Walter Scott wrote:

The spirit of chivalry had in it this point of excellence, that however overstrained and fantastic many of its doctrines may appear to us, they were all founded on generosity and self-denial, of which if the earth were deprived, it would be difficult to conceive the existence of virtue among the human race.

As throwing light upon the public taste of the time, it is interesting to note what Lockhart, the biographer, said of the reception of the novel:

For the first time Scott had ventured upon foreign ground, and the French public, long wearied of the pompous tragedians and feeble romancers, who had alone striven to bring out the ancient history and manners of their country in popular forms, were seized with a fever of delight when Louis XI and Charles the Bold started into life again at the beck of the Northern Magician The infection of admiration ran far and wide on the Continent, and soon re-acted most potently at home.

To this very creation Balzac took exception on the grounds of inaccuracy. The corrective came from the Frenchman's pen in the shape of the story "Maître Cornélius," wherein he informs the reader that, through a "singular caprice," Scott placed the Château of Plessis-les-Tours on a height, while it really stood in a hollow. The particular case can safely be left to the *littérateur*, but the principle at stake touches music. The reader will, probably, have encountered commentaries which enlarge on the haphazard methods of the romanticists. In the most glowing of their pages, it seems, Plessis-les-Tours is still on a height. Far be it from me to attempt to prove that some men did not run amuck to gather the Dead Sea fruit of indiscreet impetuosity. The act of surrendering to an emotional force which frets at guidance and tends to throw off intellectual restraint may well result in work which ill stands the

extreme scholastic test. In order to avoid both Scylla and Charybdis we have here, I think, to make a subtle distinction. No responsible critic desires to set small store on the need for accuracy, but one may very easily press the claim too urgently, and there is a point beyond which it is wrong to make it. A learned archæologist, for example, might find a hundred errors in a work which is a piece of good literature. It is a question, then, if historical romance and the music which bears an affinity to it should not be assigned to a special place; and the theory that there is a musician's license, as there is a poet's, is legitimate. Further, it is a matter of doubt if the artistic method does not obtain the desired result better than the scientific one. Some illumination on the problem is to be derived from Dr. George Saintsbury, an omnivorous reader and a critic of experience. Discussing Carlyle's "French Revolution," he tells us

It has been to me an inexhaustible joy for twenty or thirty years past to read the excellent persons who, in English and French and German, have undertaken to "correct" Carlyle. They have demonstrated in, I dare say, the most sufficient and triumphant way that he sometimes represents a thing as having happened at two o'clock on Thursday when it actually happened on Tuesday at three o'clock. . . . But have they to the satisfaction of the *phronimos*, the Aristotelian intelligent person, altered or destroyed one feature in the Carlylian picture of the uprising and of the Terror? Not they. . . . The French Revolution of Carlyle is the French Revolution as it happened, as it was. The French Revolution of the others is the French Revolution dug up in lifeless fragments by excellent persons with the newest patent pickaxes. ("Corrected Impressions.")

As I have hinted, exception to the romanticists has been taken on this question. Berlioz's portraiture may be faulty and there are, possibly, things in Weber and the Italian operas to which you cannot reconcile yourself. It is with Liszt, however, that the contention is hottest. The contemporary movement in Hungary aims at clearing away misconceptions which have for long been nursed in many quarters. The idea which animates the representatives seems to be that the time has come to reveal the folk-music of Hungary in its purity and to combat the heresies which have spread so widely. The *czardas* is to be redeemed from its meretricious surroundings. The implied reproach is put upon the shoulders of the gypsy and of Liszt. When Liszt's rhapsodies made their appearance the weight of his name gave them an authority. But the researches of Béla Bartók and Zoltán Kodály are cited as proving that his rhapsodical nature carried him away in an outburst of enthusiasm, when a more analytical turn of mind

would have caused him to pause. Specialists may find an ill-assorted array of songs and dances, many of them in corrupt versions, others grievously disfigured. Now and again, perhaps, the indigenous and the foreign jig past in ridiculous proximity; and we may, in the end, declare that a man who clung to the belief in a gypsy epic was in no wise a safe guide. "The Life of Chopin" and the book on "The Gypsies and their Music in Hungary" do not reassure us. Though mixing highly-spiced ingredients was an agreeable task to Liszt, the kind of diagnosis called for was not his forte. It is characteristic of him that "Mazeppa" ends on a confident note and shows no trace of the difficulties which beset the historian who endeavours to recount the last chapter of the hetmann's life. Plessis-les-Tours is here set on a summit, if you will. I have no desire to minimise the defects of the romanticists in this respect—they may have too often forgotten that the poet is made as well as born—but I submit that there are men who, whatever the faults of their work from the strictly scientific standpoint, give us living glimpses which are of the highest value. They enrich the world, not by laboriously collecting data, but by recording their visions; they do not learn by rote, they apprehend. The intrinsic value of the rhapsodies need not be discussed. It will at least be conceded that they are brilliant and picturesque, and what must be emphasised is that no amount of subsequent investigation can tarnish their glory. We naturally shrink from the anachronisms and solecisms born of ignorance, but we transgress on the artist's privilege if we demand an unbroken record of historical exactness. Are you prepared to say that "Quentin Durward" is not a good novel because Plessis-les-Tours is therein set upon a height?

V.

It has been said that the romantic movement had a strong musical bias and it might be added that it had an equally strong operatic one. This is no place to revive the old discussion as to whether Weber or Spohr was the first to give us a romantic opera. A right-minded posterity must always assign to Weber a higher position than that allotted to the creator of "Jessonda." Whatever misfortunes and defects characterised his worldly career, there is no doubt that Weber was one of those fortunate individuals who were born at the right time. For some indefinable reason one school of critics is little minded to credit him with what is certainly his due. After a perusal of the stage works of his predecessors and contemporaries his music carries us to another sphere. Half a

troubadour—he practised the guitar—and more than half a bohemian, the theatre world was to him a reality. His choice of subjects reveals the bent of his mind and his treatment of them ought to satisfy the fastidious. “Der Freischütz,” which marks the opening of a new era, speaks not only of an artistic change but of an intellectual convulsion. We here meet with a landscape painter of the first order—“the romanticists write musical poetry; Weber composes pictorial music,” says Dr. Brandes; there is both melodic charm and excellent characterisation.¹ “Euryanthe,” a pageant of the Middle Age, which has much in common with the *drame populaire de cape et d’épée*, forms a definite link with Boccaccio. As a chivalresque page it is worthy of Scott in his stride. The student will not fail to observe the power and eloquence of the recitatives. “Oberon,” light of touch and elfin in spirit, cut the clothes for all subsequent generations of musical fairies. Weber’s orchestra is plastic; in his hands it became, so to speak, a dramatic vehicle. He was among the first, if he were not the very first, to realise the inherent possibilities of its many voices. In other words, he understood the psychology of instruments, the study of which was raised to the *n*th degree by Berlioz. He is prolific in moments which can never lose their enchantment. The introduction to the “Der Freischütz” overture is highly effective, though simple; the second subjects of those to “Euryanthe” and “Oberon” have a perennial freshness and charm. There is a temptation to enlarge upon the contour of Weber’s melody, his strongly developed sense of colour, his feeling for harmony, his power to treat the supernatural. But it must suffice to record the enormous extent of his influence. The *largo* of the “Euryanthe” overture was not forgotten by the Wagner of “Lohengrin”. It is, in fact, a question if the full extent of Wagner’s indebtedness to Weber is fully recognised. Weber opened up “fresh woods and pastures new” and the modern musician who, in examining Debussy and Ravel, is spirited away to China or Java owes him more than he is commonly aware of.

If Weber represent romanticism in its pictorial aspect, Berlioz was the incarnation of its dynamic one. The youthful Berlioz was the romanticist of the boulevard, ready to break his lance in any tournament. It is often regretted that in his music there is so much chaff and so little wheat, that he was readier to join a satanic orgy than a divine choir, that his compositions are illuminated by the *feu d’enfers* rather than by the *feu sacré*. But the real

¹ Compare the remark of William Pitt that he could have expected “The Lay of the Last Minstrel” from a painter, but not from a poet.

tragedy lies in the fact that he could not fully express all that he felt. No caliph ever dreamt more opulent dreams, no imagination ever soared so often into the realms of the impossible. I have not the slightest doubt that his pieces meant infinitely more to him than they ever meant to others, because they were closely associated with the wildest flights of his fancy. Ultimately defying analysis, he remains something of a contradiction, a sentimentalist—did he not wander in search of his lost soul?—with a touch of cynicism. Too much, however, has been said against him. Technically he is far from perfect, but few men have been so thoroughly original. The Love Scene and Queen Mab Scherzo of “Romeo and Juliet,” which seem to have been fashioned on another planet, are the work of a born magician and we search in vain through the whole range of French music for their equal. “La Damnation de Faust” is full of arresting episodes and it is superfluous to point out that through Berlioz a new interest in orchestration was kindled. An idea no sooner occurred to him than, by a sure instinct, it was set in its proper instrumental *milieu*. The last phase is pathetic to contemplate. The emancipator, seeking escape from the world, took refuge in the chaste scores of Gluck. The picture is one of a disillusioned romanticist. The word failure may, perhaps, describe the strange odyssey, but, if this be the correct way in which to sum up all the feverish activity, we must add that it was failure in the grand manner, ten times more impressive, ten times more fruitful than all the ephemeral successes of fortunate mediocrity.

With Schumann romanticism is in repose. We think of the “rapt inaction” of the old dreamers. By nature introspective, he was sometimes cryptic and the full beauty of his song is seldom yielded at the first advance. It might very truly be remarked of his art, as Browning said of his own poetry, that it makes no pretence to offer a substitute for a cigar or a game of dominoes. But the keen-eyed traveller will return many times to those pages in which a beautiful thought is beautifully expressed, as, for example, in the first few bars of “Moonlight” and in the second theme of the “Genoveva” overture. In few other composers are the poet and musician so perfectly blended. The man who wrote the “Manfred” music was something more than a spinner of notes. He is, says Georges Pioch, with Byron and de Musset the most sincere of the romanticists. Chopin, though less profound than Schumann, is more intimate. He is probably the only notable writer whom we can call a salon composer without using that threadbare term in a derogatory sense. The Chopin of the

drawing-room is the essential Chopin, the Chopin of the nocturnes, the études, the ballades, and the valse. His romantic feeling is expressed in relatively small compass; it is the romanticism of moonlit nights and eager whisperings.

Liszt calls us to the heights. He was concerned with the heroic aspect of romanticism. A cosmopolitan with the courtly manners of an ambassador, no man was ever more susceptible to the finer influences of life and culture. He might well have sighed with Heine, "How I long for the roses of Shiraz!" When he took up his residence in Paris romanticism was very much in the air. In his presence Victor Hugo is said to have read his "*Ce qu'on entend sur la montagne*," which forms the basis of the first symphonic poem. It is easy to imagine the extent of the influence of the movement on the composer's impressionable nature. Were I asked to name the musician who seems to embody all that Pater meant by his phrase "born romanticist," I should say Liszt. He often sang the pleasure that is half pain. With him we have all the familiar ingredients—flowers, incense, a regret for things or times past and a woman, delicate, beautiful and sad, languishing on the balcony. Liszt's education was obtained in the university of the world. He remains an eternal reproach to all who are wont to deliver themselves to abstractions, who bow the knee to inelastic theories concerning æsthetics. Covering a large field—we find here a Pisan tranquillity, there an echo of the distant tumult—it is not surprising if the subsoil be sometimes untouched. But I protest most vigorously against the interpretation of his life and work which portrays him as entirely shallow and continually superficial. Such a finding is at variance with two of his most prominent actions, his retiral from the public platform while still in his prime and his withdrawal from the conductorship at Weimar. Behind the posing, if you must have it so, there is the real, the earnest Liszt. His powers of assimilation were, doubtless, immeasurably greater than his powers of creation. And you may add that the heroic note is often strained to its utmost and Ossa piled needlessly upon Pelion. We are not here, however, primarily concerned with Liszt's value as a composer, but with his importance as a figure in the romantic group. Attention must, therefore, be concentrated on his attitude to the past and to the future. It was left to Wagner to point out that Liszt "was the first to place the worth and significance of his forerunners in their fullest light." He gazed long and lovingly towards the ancient seats of learning. To Italy, cradle of the refinements and the humanities,

Infinite of years

Strong with old strength of great things.

he often turned his eyes. His hero was the complete man of the Renaissance, a world figure like Dante or Petrarch. It seems to me, at least, that the beautiful blossom of the "Liebesträume" exhales the perfume of the South, that the stem of the plant is firmly set in the soil of a semi-tropical garden; and the composer, in his least unconventional moments, has a way of turning to the *cantilena* style of the Italian opera and embracing it with all the fervour of a young lover. Not once or twice but frequently he revels in the thirds and sixths of Southern passion and sentimentality. It is needless to say that there is a definite connection between the suave and leisurely melodies of the Italian stage and those of many of the romanticists, and some of the lesser fry read their Bellini to good purpose. If Liszt found the refrain of the sirens and sibyls of the Southern shore entrancing, he came to new tasks with the appetite of a Galileo. As *précurseur* and *novateur* he claims special notice. The works of few other men and no other romanticist have had so great an effect on subsequent musicians. A study of his music proves that he anticipated much that has come from later writers. His interest in the researches of Fétis shows how deeply he was immersed in harmonic exploration, and M. Calvocoressi has demonstrated that in "Les Jeux d'eau à la Villa d' Este" "almost every bar will be found to deserve attentive consideration for its boldness in tone- and colour-effects akin to the boldest dared by a Debussy or a Ravel." Of the heroic aspect, with its fur and feathers, its battle hymns and eloquent perorations, he is the perfect exemplar.

In Wagner the romantic movement found its culmination. I have mentioned the influence which Weber had upon him. It remains to say that he was much indebted to Liszt and, in the orchestral sense, to Berlioz. His theory regarding the suitability of legendary subjects for dramatic treatment is well known. What in his day was the music of the future portrayed the knights and ladies, the heroes and goddesses of far-off times. Of all the romanticists he was the most richly endowed. The pictures are painted with the sure confidence of genius. Where the walls of the gallery are so well covered with portraits and landscapes I must, perforce, select one or two of them in order to show the nature of Wagner's romantic temper. In "The Flying Dutchman" we have a tale borrowed from Heine and one cannot fail to observe that the sea is depicted with conspicuous success, that it becomes, in his hands, almost a living thing. In "Tannhäuser" the shepherd's

song to Dame Holda, sung amidst the sylvan splendours of the valley, calls for comment. The second act of "Tristan and Isolda," a miracle of beauty, is nothing if not an inspired piece of romanticism. The scene of Siegfried and the Rhine Maidens in "The Dusk of the Gods" might have come from the pen of one of those poets who inhabited the land of fables. Though with Wagner romanticism travelled from its Southern home and reappeared in more muscular form, I cannot think of any passage which so well epitomises all that is best in it as the phrase of the sirens in "Tannhäuser." There is a sense of distance, a subtlety of harmony, an ethereal softness in that call which marks it out as one of the most wonderful products of its author's vast imagination. And with these magic notes sounding from afar, I take leave of this fascinating subject.